

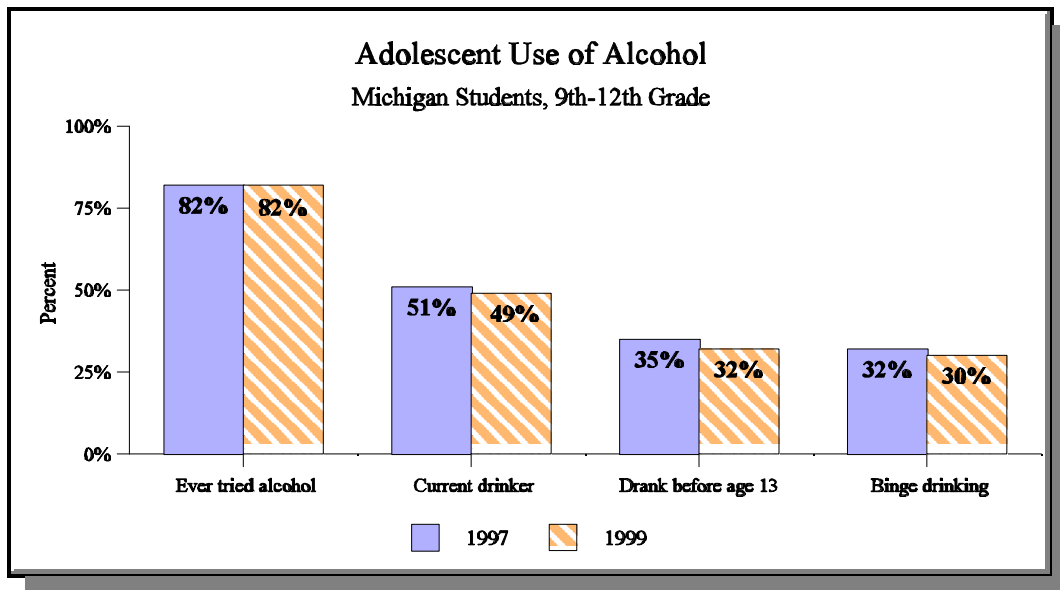
Focused Indicators

Health Risk Behaviors

Adolescent Use of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs

How are we doing?

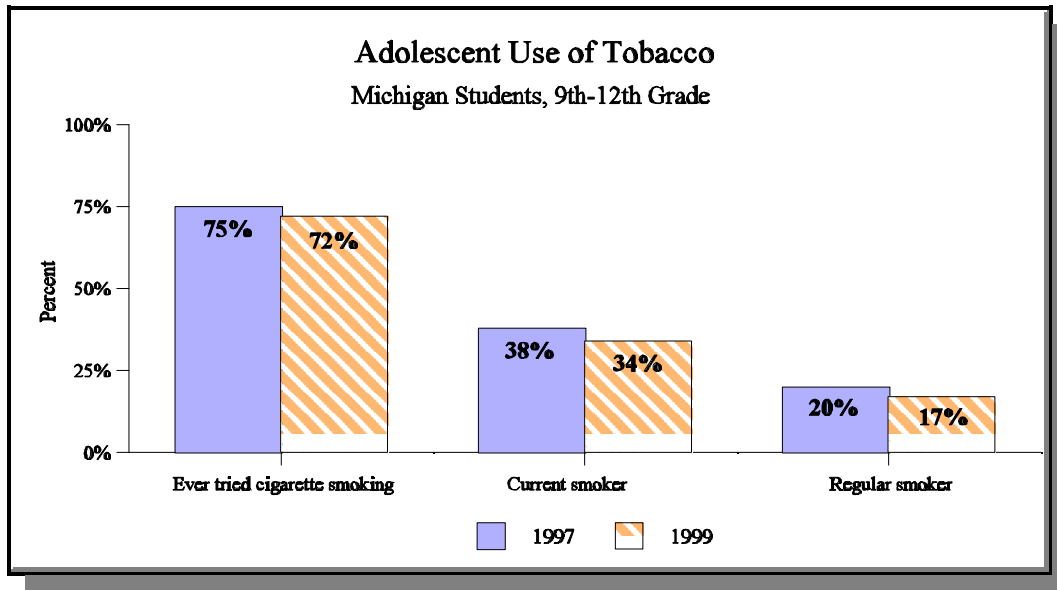
The use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs by adolescents jeopardizes the health and well-being of Michigan youth. Adolescent use of these substances is measured by the Michigan Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS is a joint project between the Michigan Department of Community Health and Michigan Department of Education. The 1997 and 1999 surveys obtained a representative sample of ninth through twelfth grade students in public schools. The findings can be considered estimates of the prevalence of health-risk behaviors among Michigan public high school students. Estimates from the 1997 and 1999 surveys are comparable.



Source: YRBS, Health Promotions and Publications, MDCH

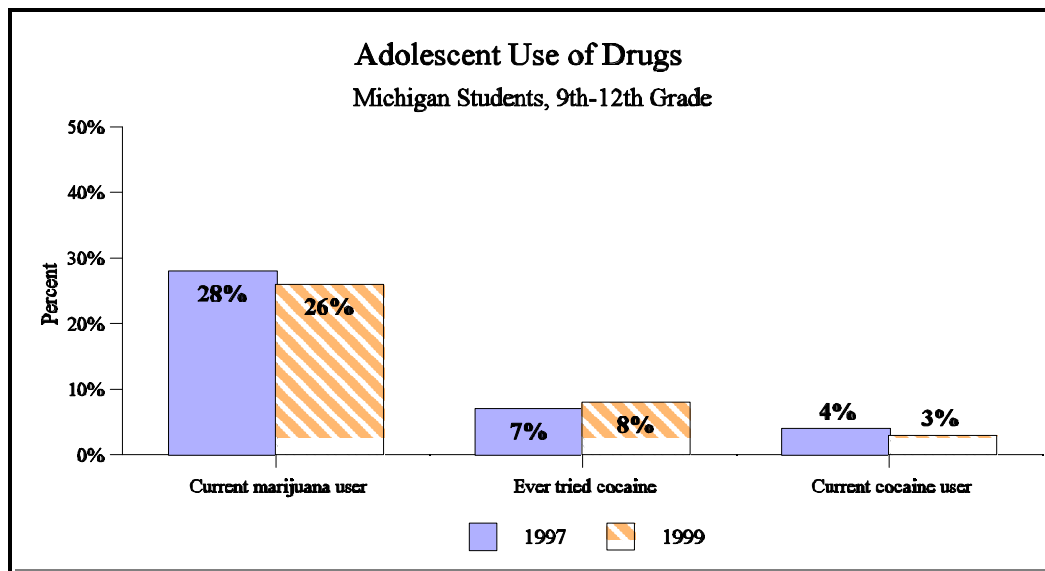
People who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who begin at 21. The 1999 Michigan YRBS reports:

- 82 percent of survey respondents had tried alcohol and 49 percent were current drinkers;
- 32 percent had their first full drink of alcohol before age 13;
- 30 percent engaged in binge drinking; and
- There was no significant difference between the 1997 and 1999 results for these four alcohol use indicators.



Approximately 80 percent of adult smokers started smoking before the age of 18, and almost no one begins after the age of 25. The 1999 Michigan YRBS reports:

- 72 percent of survey respondents had tried smoking a cigarette and 34 percent smoked during the previous 30 days (current smoker);
- 17 percent were regular smokers; and
- There was no significant difference between the 1997 and 1999 results for these



three smoking indicators.

Source: YRBS, Health Promotions and Publications, MDCH

Despite improvements in recent years, illicit drug use is greater among high school students in the U.S. than in any other industrialized nation in the world. The 1997 Michigan YRBS reports:

- 46 percent of survey respondents had tried marijuana and 26 percent were current users;
- 8 percent had tried cocaine and 3 percent were current users; and
- There was no significant difference between the 1997 and 1999 results for these three drug use indicators.

How does Michigan compare with the U.S.?

In 1999, the percent of adolescents who identified themselves as having used alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (cited above) in Michigan was similar to the U.S. average.

How are different populations affected?

Twelfth graders were more likely to drink and binge drink. In general, white students were more likely than African-American students to be recent or regular smokers and current alcohol drinkers; engage in binge drinking; and have ever used cocaine. Males were more at risk for the use of alcohol and several other drugs, such as marijuana and cocaine. While females were as likely as males to have ever tried various illegal substances, they were less likely to report recent use.

What other information is important to know?

Heavy drinking by youths has been linked to physical fights, the destruction of property, high-risk sexual behavior, other criminal activity, as well as poor academic and employment outcomes.

Tobacco use is the primary cause of preventable deaths in Michigan, accounting for approximately one in five deaths. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 70 percent of adolescent smokers wish they had never started smoking.

Drug abuse is related to increased injuries, early unintended pregnancies, academic problems, delinquency, and the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases. Clinical studies have shown that marijuana can have a host of acute and short-term effects including impairment of skills related to attention, memory, and learning as well as complex motor skills such as those needed to drive a car. Studies also indicate that regular marijuana users may have many of the same respiratory problems as cigarette smokers.

What is the Department of Community Health doing to affect this indicator?

The department is actively working to prevent adolescent use of alcohol, tobacco, and other

drugs. Twenty-one programs within the state offer specialized substance abuse assessment, outpatient, intensive outpatient, and residential services to adolescents. The department also funds Teen Health Centers/Alternative Models. They provide primary health care services to adolescents, including an evaluation of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use and provide support to secondary and tertiary services. Health promotion and education are provided to encourage prevention.

Departmental prevention initiatives include information dissemination through newsletters and presentations, education, problem identification and referral, support for coalitions that raise awareness and mobilize communities for change, and environmental activities such as point of sale reduction activities and promotion of healthy lifestyle activities. The department supports peer counseling, mentoring, life skills development, information and help lines, and other programs.

Departmental initiatives to reduce tobacco use include promoting strong public and voluntary policies to increase awareness of the danger of tobacco use and secondhand smoke; preventing the sale and promotion of tobacco to youth; and providing a statewide media campaign with prevention, cessation, and secondhand smoke messages.

The department works with local criminal justice agencies, education providers, grassroots organizations, and other state agencies to reduce and prevent adolescent substance abuse, to reclaim and restore neighborhoods, and to educate the children of Michigan about the dangers of substance abuse. Programs such as the Michigan Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking (MCRUD), a coalition of prevention partners, focus on underage drinking issues through grant awards and support of eight local coalitions.

The department has sponsored several new programs in partnership with Michigan universities. More than 1,700 resident assistants, hall directors, Greek advisors, and student peer leaders were trained in alcohol interventions on 12 campuses. A Campus Mentoring Program that emphasizes an alcohol and drug-free approach to campus life reached about 3,000 incoming freshmen at 13 participating universities. The department also unveiled an advertising campaign aimed at educating college students on the dangers of binge drinking. In addition to advertisement and informational brochures for parents, the department also designed a web site to address binge drinking and included a Survey of Alcohol Policies with responses from 15 universities.

During the past three years, the Safe and Drug Free Schools program served almost 1.9 million school children. The DARE program teaches young children about violence prevention and the dangers of substance use. In 1998, more than 200,000 students, parents, and other community members participated in 55 local drug and violence prevention programs. In collaboration with various state agencies and the Executive Office, the department worked to develop the Governor Engler's Blueprint for a Drug-Free Michigan.